Christian Community

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CHURCHMEN LOOK AT THE WELFARE STATE

By Ray Gibbons

Many Americans have never been nearer to England than New York City, but they hold very decided opinions about the welfare state. The subject is fiercely debated in public forums and in our parlors, often with more heat than light. In an effort to get a first-hand view of what is happening in Britain twenty-seven ministers, lay men and women from eleven states, members of Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed Churches, gave the welfare state their careful attention on the 1951 European Seminar conducted by the Council for Social Action. We heard twenty-one speakers with varied viewpoints—bankers, doctors, social workers, church leaders, industrialists and government administrators, both municipal and national. We listened to leaders of the Labor Government and then interviewed the executives of the Conservative Party. In London, Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford and Cambridge we talked with city officials, with church and social workers, and with the men and women in the hotels, busses and stores. We visited public health clinics, housing authority developments and schools of many kinds. Observations were checked by group discussion and personal prejudices were cancelled out by seeking group concensus. Every effort was made to get a clear, accurate view of what was happening and what it meant.

Members of European Study Tour visit new planned community of Wythenshawe, near Manchester
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Stress Christian Base

The first impression one receives as he views the welfare state in Britain is that it *has a strong religious and moral foundation.* The leaders of the program publicly acknowledge their indebtedness to Christian teaching, especially to the non-conformist churches. Clement Atlee has said that "first place in the influences that built up the Socialist movement must be given to religion." Dr. Leslie Cooke quoted Principal Lovell-Cocks as saying that British Socialism owes more to Methodism than to Marxism. Mr. George Thomas, a member of Parliament from South Wales, said that he and many other Labor Party members received their first lessons in public speaking as lay preachers in the Methodist churches. Lord MacDonald and his son-in-law, both members of Parliament, claimed that the moral imperative for their program grew out of the religious instruction they had received in the Congregational Churches. As Chuter Ede, head of the House of Commons, said to us at a tea given at the House of Parliament, "Non-conformity has taught us the spirit of equality. On the continent authoritarian communism contends with authoritarian Catholicism but we intend to show a third and better way—the way of freedom. In your country you speak of four freedoms. We believe in a fifth freedom—freedom for the Kingdom of God and social justice."

Objectives of Planning

The second distinct impression is that the welfare state is *dedicated to economic planning as a matter of deep conviction.* "The depression years bit deeply into the conscience of Great Britain," said Mr. W. Crick, head of the International Department of the Midland Bank, largest in England. Planning for all is the avowed purpose of the Labor Party but it is widely supported by all parties. The sweeping provisions of the White Paper on Employment Policy of 1944 were accepted by nearly everyone. There are many disagreements about how and where planning should be used but nearly all agree it is necessary and desirable. Even

the Conservative Party would not abolish the nationalization of coal and railroads and would not try to unscramble the public utilities, but would simply de-centralize their administration. Only the profitable iron and steel industry would it return to private hands immediately.

The official Labor Government policy declares, "The primary objective of fiscal policy should be full employment and a rising standard of living." Mr. George Thomas, M. P., formerly a miner in South Wales, maintained that nationalization was a step toward economic democracy. "No country is a complete democracy where employment is at the capricious whim of a few men whose chief interest is profit." Formerly a London phone call closed all the mines in his valley. Miners were frequently idle and wages were low. Young men hated to admit they were miners and mothers tried to prevent their sons from entering the mines. Under nationalization, he said, the miners found a new status. They had holidays and regular work. Their wages had risen to the third highest in the country. They served with management on Joint Production Boards. They increased production so that England reached pre-war levels before any other country of Europe. Previous to nationalization the greatest curse was silicosis, a disease which turned the lungs to stone. In one year 5,000 miners in South Wales died of this trouble. Under nationalization a great research program was undertaken and now the disease can be successfully combatted. Young men are being recruited for the mines. The former owners are receiving three per-cent each year on their compensation of 250 million pounds. In spite of this additional cost the mines paid a profit last year. Mr. Thomas feels that democracy must grow or it will die and that *nationalization is a way of extending industrial democracy and improving the status of workers.* "The answer to communism," he said to us, "is social security for the family and dignity for the individual."

The second purpose of planning is *to raise the standard of living.* One half of Britain's trade was lost during the war and half her shipping destroyed. Many of her industrial plants were demolished and one-third of her housing was damaged or destroyed. She emerged from the war as a debtor nation in a very precarious world. Labor leaders readily agree that Britain's greatest need is to increase productivity rapidly. They admit that a policy of full employment has certain dangers and that the question of incentives in the welfare state is very vexing. The crises over Revaluation, Fuel and Korea were partly the result of world situations over which Labor had no control. All agree there is a great need to increase Britain's production, — and rapidly.

The third purpose of planning is *to distribute goods more equitably among all the people.* This began long before Labor came to power. In 1911 one per cent of the people owned 70 per cent of the wealth; in 1938 one per cent owned 55 per cent of the wealth, but in 1947 this one per cent owned just 50 per cent of the wealth. Before the war four million people paid taxes amounting to 19 per cent of the national income. After the war fifteen million people pay 36 per cent in taxes. In 1948 there were only 45 people in Great Britain with a net income of more than 6,000 pounds. Inheritance taxes run as high as 80 per cent. In 1938 one-fifth of the government income was spent for social services; now two-fifths go for this purpose. Increased income from the wealthier is being distributed more widely through welfare services. At the same time real wages rose 11 per cent between 1938 and 1946 while income from rents and profits decreased 20 per cent. More people are sharing Britain's pitifully small cake.

General Approval

A third impression indicates that *the welfare state is meeting with general acceptance.* It was an executive of the Conservative Party who told us that all parties subscribe to the welfare services and that the Conservative Party initiated the programs for education, family allowances and food subsidies in wartime. The National Insurance and Assistance program began under Lloyd George in 1911, and the Beveridge Report came out in 1942 when a coalition government was in power. He claimed that his party would not scrap the housing program but would build 50 per cent more houses—and cheaper. He was proud of the part Lord Woolton, now chairman of the Conservative Party, had played in developing the national health program. The Conservative Party would not abolish it, but try to administer it better.

By and large the medical profession supports the program. The rates approved by the government were those proposed by the profession. There are some inequities which need adjustment but dentists and specialists are doing better than before the program began. There is general agreement that more people are receiving more comprehensive medical care.

It does not appear that the welfare program is destroying the moral character of the people. We were amazed to find such confidence in the integrity of the administrators. The greatest criticism was levelled against bureaucracy as such because it produces stodginess and pettiness. There is active political participation among the people. Eighty-five per cent of the electorate voted in the last by-election, we were told. All civic freedoms are vigorously expressed. As Lord Stansgate declared, "As long as we can think freely, speak freely and act freely you do not need to fear that the welfare state will destroy us."

What of Voluntary Efforts?

When the government takes over responsibility for welfare what becomes of the private, voluntary societies? In what ways do the churches express their concern for the welfare of the people? The first of these questions was answered by Mr. F. Douglas Weeks, secretary of the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Services. "The voluntary societies have pioneered many of the present government programs. Today many of these organizations carry on the programs with a subsidy from the statutory authority. Churches, too, may be subsidized in their welfare program. This frees the organization for other kinds of services and extends the range of their activities. The more the public services increase the greater is the work of the private societies."

The churches are seeking answers to the new relationships in the welfare state. Alan Chambers of Mt. Zion Church, Manchester, heads a committee to explore the relationship of the churches to the satellite cities, like Wythenshawe, where a whole city is planned and built under public authority. Other churches feel the heavy burden of masterful relief has been lessened by the public welfare and they can give more attention to religious, social and psychological problems. All agree that the Church has an important function to perform in appraising the whole program from Christian perspectives. If the Church has been the mother of Britain's program, as has been claimed, it must not be afraid to spank the child when necessary and defend it when justified.

What works in Britain would not

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International Relations Letter

The editor of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY has agreed to publish in each issue a page of comment and information on international relations. We hope it will be useful. If it seems so to you, we hope you will tell us. That's about all the introduction needed. Let's begin with something on

The United Nations

It's six years now since the U. N. was established. The inability of the organization to make any headway toward the reduction of armaments and the control of atomic energy, its frustrated attempts to lessen the tension between Russia and the West and the turning toward alliances—permitted by the U. N. Charter but essentially outside the organization—have, to be frank about it, hurt the morale of the U. N. and of its supporters. Is the U. N. going to meet the same fate as the League of Nations?

The best recent statement on the U. N. I have seen is in the World Order Day Message of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. "In the hour of peril," says the Message, "the churches of Christ in America should lift their voices in support of the one international organization without which the whole world might even now be engulfed by war. It would be a calamity if the thinking Christian people of our country were to despair of the United Nations, or cast doubt upon its potentiality as an agency for the promotion of international peace and security."

The Message sums up the achievements of the U. N. Here they are: "The U. N. helped still the guns of conflict in Palestine, Kashmir, and Indonesia. Its pressure has been felt in many areas of political disorder where, but for the processes of conciliation, large-scale hostilities might have broken out. It has sought to restrain aggression in and against Korea. It has launched a program of technical assistance to underdeveloped areas. It has provided succor and protection for refugees and displaced persons. It has fed millions of hungry children. It has exercised supervision over eleven territories which have been placed under the Trusteeship System. It has assisted people in their quest for self-government. It has approved a Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is now negotiating a Covenant on Human Rights. It has submitted to the member states a Convention on Genocide. It has exercised its influence in support of religious freedom. Through its Specialized Agencies, the United Nations has worked for the improvement of social and economic conditions throughout the world."

That's a bare-bones outline. If you want more detailed facts, write to the Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, and ask for Publication 4298 on "The United Nations Today." You and I might remember that when it comes to foreign relations the American people are terribly subject to shifts of mood. In so far as they now question the value of the U. N. they are not necessarily doing so on the basis of facts; they are merely swinging over to another mood. Our business is to fight these moods with basic principles *and with facts.*

Senators on Disarmament

Any talk about disarmament now seems highly academic. The U. S. is going ahead full speed building overwhelming military power and setting up a series of alliances. But, whatever church people may think, there are some U. S. Senators—at least 23 of them—who know that arms and alliances are not the central goals of this country and that it is time to say so. These men, led by Senator Flanders of Vermont, are supporting Senate Concurrent Resolution 42, introduced in August and now in the hands of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Tom Connally, Chairman). The Resolution does three things. It declares the dominant purpose of this country to be the achievement of international disarmament; it urges the President to pursue this objective by all appropriate means; and it states the intention of the U. S. to use the energies and resources released from arms building for assisting other peoples to develop their resources and establish their self-support.

This doesn't mean that these Senators do not support the "positions of strength" doctrine of Secretary Acheson. They do. And so does the C. S. A. But they know, and all of us ought to know, that our present concentration on arms is dangerous. It is dangerous for three reasons. It may incite our opponents to armed action, instead of inducing them to change their policies. It may lead us to accept war as inevitable and weaken our efforts to relieve tensions by peaceful means. It may create among some other peoples—and is to some extent already doing it—the impression that the U. S. puts almost its whole reliance on military power.

The U. S. is, in fact, confronted with an almost indescribably severe test—whether, namely, we can increase our military power to the level we think necessary without becoming the captives and victims of militarism. Already there are signs, in Congress and among our people, of a growing impatience with any international efforts save those that increase our armed power.

Get a copy of this resolution by writing to Senator Ralph Flanders. If you think it worthy of support, send a carefully-worded statement on it to Senator Flanders and to Senator Tom Connally, Chairman, the Foreign Relations Committee. (The C.S.A. International Relations Committee has voted to support "the spirit and purposes" of this resolution.)

Have You Read This?

The C.S.A. has distributed 2500 copies of its policy statement, "The Making of a More Peaceful World." It is a concise statement of "certain facts and views" on Korea, Russia, Asia, China, Western Europe and the United Nations. Single copies free; 49 copies or less, 5 cents each; fifty or more, 3 cents each. Why not order it for your group or for all the members of your church?

Let's Help Each Other

Despite the fact that almost every international problem is highly complicated it sometimes seems easier to arrive at a fairly intelligent idea of how it ought to be settled than to organize a local church for study and action on international affairs. "Easy enough," someone might say, "to send out well-worded statements on how to help the underdeveloped countries; but how do you get grassroots Americans to take an interest in these things and do something?"

We can help each other answer this

question. Did you read the article on "International Relations in Your Church" in last month's CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY? It offered a lot of suggestions that were at least supposed to be practical. This year we really want to go to town on helping local leaders to get some participation from rank and file church members. We'd like to know what you thought of the ideas offered in that article and what other ideas you have. What have you done that might work somewhere else? Or, if you have done practically nothing, what is your problem? How about getting a group together for the purpose of going through the article to see what they think—and then sending me your conclusions?

"The Case for India"

If you can buy or borrow a copy of the October issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, by all means read the article by Vincent Sheean on "The Case for India." If you or your friends have been critical of India for not signing the treaty with Japan and for some other things, this article will give you something to think about. By the way, I hope you didn't miss John Cowles' article in the October 9 issue of LOOK, entitled "Let's Launch an American Peace Offensive."

Point IV Program

One of our leaders in New Jersey asked us just what action Congress has taken on the Point IV program and it was difficult to tell her. There was no separate item in the Mutual Security Program bills passed by the two houses, everything being lumped under Military and Economic Aid. Next month we hope to be able to give you the results of an analysis being prepared by Tom Keehn. Meanwhile, it is probably fair to say that appropriations for specifically Point IV (technical aid) work will amount to about 80 million. The attitude of Congress on these bills points up what we were saying above—that many Americans are impatient with any international action that does not directly spell more military power for our side. This is a shortsighted attitude and those of us who know that the basic world problem lies in the fact that one-third of the world lives in a luxurious penthouse and two-thirds live in the cellar have a job cut out for us.

What are you doing in your church to give people the facts about the underdeveloped areas and how we can help them?

Herman F. Reissig

Speaking of Books

A distinguished Christian layman, former Congressman Jerry Voorhis, has written a most readable and stimulating book entitled, *The Christian in Politics* (published by Association Press, $1.75). Drawn both from his experiences as a member of the House of Representatives and his reflections since, Mr. Voorhis discusses frankly and fairly the responsibilities and difficulties involved in relating his Christian faith to public life. Laymen will find he talks their language.

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On a more theological level, four representatives of the World's Student Christian Federation discuss *The Christian in the World Struggle,* in a paperback book by that name, available in this country from the United Student Christian Council, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, at one dollar. M. M. Thomas and J. D. McCaughey present an able statement of the case that Christians as Christians participate in the political and social struggle. Max-Alain Chevallier and Keith Bridston offer critiques of their position.

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Within a few months of each other appear Luke Ebersole's *Church Lobbying in the Nation's Capital* (Macmillan, $2.75) and Karl Schriftgiesser's *The Lobbyists* (Little, Brown, $3.50). The former is a careful study of church-related legislative efforts. The latter covers a broader field. While pulling no punches in recording the activities of special interest groups, such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Committee for Constitutional Government, Mr. Schriftgiesser insists that lobbies, provided they operate in the open, perform an important function and that public interest lobbies have rendered important services, as in the fight for civilian control of atomic energy.

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What is the Christian ethic? And how do we derive a social policy from the principle of "obedient love?" For a careful study, rooted in biblical and theological scholarship, you will welcome Paul Ramsey's *Basic Christian Ethics* (Scribners, $3.75).

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Christ and Culture, by H. Richard Niebuhr (Harper, $3.50), has been so widely reviewed and so rightly acclaimed that we simply say here: Don't miss it.

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If you have ever had to plan a meeting—or have ever had to sit through one that was not too interesting—you will be curious about *New Ways to Better Meetings* by Bert and Frances Strauss (Viking, $2.95). It contains many suggestions for getting full participation and support.

Help Wanted

In response to numerous requests from our churches for news from the field, *Christian Community* plans to devote an entire issue early in 1952 to case studies of significant social action in local congregations.

The executives of CSA and CCSA request that pastors and local social action committees cooperate by sending to the editor clear, concise accounts of projects in which churches and committees have taken part. There are no limitations as to subject—community action, economic life, race relations, national legislation, world order. Tell us how you planned it, who sponsored it, what you did, and what the effects were. Pictures will help but are not required.

Stories should be received not later than January 1, 1952.

The Welfare State

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necessarily work in the United States but cooperative study of such welfare programs will profit not only the church members in England but those in our country. Certainly there is much we can learn, both favorable and unfavorable, from Britain's brave experience with the welfare state.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Additional copies may be obtained for 2 cents each. Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Ray Gibbons, Director, Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio